

as the Medicare program has wasted in just one year.

We recently were told about the National Park Service spending \$584,000 per home to build 18 houses, 18 houses for its employees in the Yosemite National Park. One of these homes cost \$700,000; \$584,000 for homes for employees of the National Park Service.

It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, what Federal bureaucrats can justify or rationalize for themselves. The American people should realize that any money they send here to Washington to our Federal Government will be spent in the least economical, least efficient, most wasteful way possible. It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, what government officials and bureaucrats will do when they are spending other people's money.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, we must never forget a time in our country when American workers were forced to toil in appalling conditions, earning pitifully low wages, a time when men, women and, yes, even our children labored under hazardous conditions even during 12 hour work days without breaks or sick leave. If they were injured or dared to complain about these injustices, they risked losing their jobs.

Today, thankfully, we have a minimum wage, an 8 hour workday, sick leave, health and safety protections, workers' compensation and unemployment insurance, overtime pay, Social Security, pensions and the right to organize.

These hard-won protections may never have been realized without the heroic efforts of organized labor. For it was organized labor that led the campaign to provide free public education to all our Nation's children. And it was organized labor that was a leader in helping to pass landmark legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Age Discrimination Act.

As a result, all Americans benefited. That is why, Mr. Speaker, when a ballot initiative in California threatened labor's very existence, voters stood with our unions. On that June 2nd election day, approximately 25,000 volunteers walked precincts and staffed phone banks, turning out California voters in record numbers, and they defeated Proposition 226, the so-called paycheck protection initiative.

The defeat of this antiworker initiative is not only a triumph for California workers but for working families across America.

By defeating Proposition 226, California voters sent a resounding message that the voices of working families will

not be silenced. And so will the rest of the country when similar initiatives around the country and in Congress are introduced, because each day every American benefits from the legacy of labor's invaluable achievements.

Mr. Speaker, Americans have a duty to preserve not only these hard-won gains but labor's ability to advocate for working Americans today and in the future.

THE YEAR 2000 PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, right now it is about 6:30 a.m. on the West Coast. Imagine if you are waking up and for some reason the power is off and your alarm did not ring. The toaster will not work and the TV will not turn on. The faucet and shower are not working either. Your car pool did not show up and the phone will not work to call in late. Even your cell phone is not working.

The streets are a mess because the street lights are out and, as you stop at the bank, your cash machine says your balance is zero. Beyond that, your flight to Chicago has been canceled. In fact, all flights are canceled, and you finally realize that it is going to be a really bad day.

The year 2000 problem is real. In less than 15 months, we will face a different world. Not only will it be a new millennium but the effect and power of computers running every part of our lives may be more real than ever imagined.

□ 0930

Simply put, the year 2000 bug or Y2K, as it is called, if not corrected could, at worst, lead to catastrophic scenarios and, at best, to major inconveniences.

This body has held hearings on this issue. Research studies have been written. The media has been heralding Y2K. Yet, even though we have seen this problem on the horizon for many years, most governmental agencies are not even close to being compliant regarding the myriad of possible commuter mishaps that will come at midnight on December 31, 1999.

The gentleman from California (Mr. HORN) has done excellent work in his report on Y2K. His findings and his grading system of the public sector are troubling. Yes, he graded the Federal agencies just like students. His findings and his grading of the public sector are very troubling.

Over all, the administration gets an "F" for Y2K preparedness. As a teacher in my life before Congress, I can relate to a grading system. First, students do not like to have their grades waived in front of the class, let alone the whole Nation, but like careless students who procrastinate, a test is in place to check on progress.

Frankly, I found the grades for the recent test of the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN) for Y2K compliance

for government agencies clearly abysmal. Since the taxpayers are the financial supporters of these agencies, I think it is appropriate to take a look at a few grades.

The Department of Defense, which oversees the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, run in large by computers, gets a "D". The Environmental Protection Agency, this famous organization which monitors the cleanliness of our water and air, gets a failing "F".

The Department of Education, the agency that should be setting a good example for students, is getting an unsatisfactory "D" in computer compliance. The Department of Energy, regulating everything from nuclear plants to hydroelectric dams is failing miserably with an "F".

The Department of Transportation, the agency that has direct oversight over the Federal Aviation Administration and their control of the skies and airplane traffic, is getting an "F". This really concerns me. I fly a lot. These are just a handful of the grades.

While some progress is being made, serious vulnerabilities still remain. The administration with its departments and agencies must be able to provide the American people with a sound plan to deal with Y2K. The unfortunate truth is that the final test is coming in 18 months. If we fail, we cannot just go back and retake the class. We can only live with the circumstances.

ALL AMERICANS BENEFIT FROM ORGANIZED LABOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MASCARA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Mr. MASCARA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to praise the hard work and efforts that organized labor has given to this country during the past century. These organized groups of men and women from all walks of life are the backbone of the economic foundation of this great country.

Some may argue that the creation of our great American middle class just happened. No. It was built on the backs of working men and women who belong to labor unions. All workers, including nonunion and white collar workers, were given the same benefits fought for by workers who organized and participated in the collective bargaining process.

All Americans benefited. They benefited by having better wages, safety in the workplace, health care benefits and pensions. These benefits, as well as improved working conditions, are now under assault in this country. All workers in this great Nation should join together this week and support a day to make our voices heard.

We must protect the strides we have made during the last half century. We must never go back to the days of deplorable working conditions. Never.